“Before I worked for S.H.I.E.L.D., I made mistakes, but I’m done running from my past. We have to go back to where it all started. We have unfinished business. One thing’s for sure: it’s going to be a hell of a reunion.”

~ Natasha Romanoff aka Black Widow

In Marvel Studios’ action-packed spy thriller “Black Widow,” Natasha Romanoff aka Black Widow confronts the darker parts of her ledger when a dangerous conspiracy with ties to her past arises. Pursued by a force that will stop at nothing to bring her down, Natasha must deal with her history as a spy and the broken relationships left in her wake long before she became an Avenger. “I think from the very beginning when we first started talking about doing this standalone film, there was no reason to do it unless we could really dig deep and be brave and go there,” says Scarlett Johansson, who reprises her role as Natasha/Black Widow. “Having played this character for a decade, I wanted to make sure that it would feel artistically and creatively rewarding for me as well as the fans.”

Producer Kevin Feige, Marvel Studios’ president and chief creative officer, says that Natasha Romanoff has sparked intrigue since her big-screen debut in 2010’s “Iron Man 2.” “She has such a rich backstory,” says Feige. “We’ve hinted at it throughout all the other films. But we approach it in a completely unexpected way. She’s been up to a lot all along—in between when we see her in the other movies—some of which will be surprising to people.”

According to Feige, it was Johansson who reached out to director Cate Shortland to see if she’d consider helming the film. “Cate came to Los Angeles and fell in love with the character and the possibilities,” says Feige. “She realized she could tell a very personal story and do something extremely special on a big canvas.”

Says Shortland, “I think what’s exciting about the film is we’re playing with the audience’s expectations. We’re exploring parts of Natasha that the audience has absolutely no idea about. We explore her family, love and passion, and you get to see all these facets of her we have never seen before.”

According to the director, the creative team had almost a blank slate in terms of Natasha’s backstory. “I worked with a Russian historian in London to build a history of where she would’ve been born, what her mother would’ve been like, why her mother would’ve given her up and what her childhood would’ve been like before she went into the Red Room,” says Shortland. “Then we had to create a whole narrative that fit within the narrative of our film—

how she would've been trained to be an American girl, to speak English and understand popular culture. I always try to build characters from their skeleton to create real people. Even though this is about a Super Hero, I went through the same process. Black Widow is a femme fatale, but what is she underneath that?"

In addition to her 2010 debut, Natasha Romanoff has appeared in six Marvel films, including "Marvel's The Avengers," "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," "Avengers: Age of Ultron," "Captain America: Civil War," "Avengers: Infinity War" and 2019's exciting and emotional "Avengers: Endgame." "We introduced Natasha Romanoff to our audience in 'Iron Man 2,'" says executive producer Victoria Alonso. "For me, however, the most important scene for her was in 'The Avengers' when she fights these Russians in a warehouse while wearing a dress. She walks away and picks up her high heels like an ultimate badass. In this movie, we go back to when she was about 12 years old. Little by little, we start peeling back the layers."

"Black Widow" is set before "Avengers: Infinity War." "The film takes place on the heels of 'Captain America: Civil War,'" explains co-producer Brian Chapek. "Natasha has broken the Sokovia Accords, betrayed Secretary Ross, and the Avengers find themselves disbanded. In the beginning of the movie, we establish Natasha desperate to evade Ross and leave U.S. soil. When she gets an opportunity to start over again, she quickly realizes that there are darker forces out there in the world that compel her to return to the action."

According to screenwriter Eric Pearson, the ongoing mystery of Natasha Romanoff was compelling— for both audiences and filmmakers. "I think she's the one Avenger who's shared the least about herself ever since we met her," he says. "She's not who she says she is in 'Iron Man 2.' She chooses to withhold her past and who she is personally from the audience and the other characters. In 'Black Widow,' we get to rip open her past and see what led to her hesitation to open up."

For Jac Schaeffer, who contributed to the story, having the wealth of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Johansson's portrayal as Natasha to draw upon was both lucrative and daunting. "There's a burden to deliver on this woman that we know, love and idolize in so many ways," she says. "There is such a rich tapestry to draw from and then we expand upon all of it."

The end result is a high-intensity action thriller, says Chapek. "At the same time, our movie answers a lot of mysteries about Natasha's past," he adds. "We've seen her character evolve and open herself up to us. We've given hints about who she is and what makes her tick. In 'Avengers: Endgame' we saw Natasha get to a place in her life where she could make the ultimate sacrifice for the greater good. Now we want to tell the story about who she really is as a human being and what led to her being capable of making that heroic decision."

Executive producer Brad Winderbaum adds, "In every Marvel movie we try to bring a different tone, a different genre, a different idea to the table—something that we haven't seen before, which lets us make wild swings between something like 'Captain America: Winter Soldier' to 'Thor: Ragnarok.' We are always searching for something new, and with 'Black Widow' we unveil a whole aspect of her history that's completely unexpected."

Based on the beloved Marvel comic-book series first published in 1964, "Black Widow" stars Tony Award® and BAFTA winner, and five-time Golden Globe® and recent double Oscar®

nominee Scarlett Johansson (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Marriage Story,” “Jojo Rabbit”) as Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow, Oscar nominee Florence Pugh (“Midsommar,” “Little Women”) as Yelena Belova, Academy Award®-winning actress Rachel Weisz (“The Favourite,” “Disobedience”) as Melina, and Golden Globe nominee David Harbour (“Stranger Things,” “Extraction”) as Alexei aka Red Guardian. O-T Fagbenle (“The Handmaid’s Tale,” “The Five”) was cast as Mason, and Academy Award® and BAFTA winner William Hurt (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Avengers: Infinity War”) reprises his role as Secretary of State Thaddeus Ross.

Marvel Studios’ “Black Widow” is helmed by multiple award-winning director Cate Shortland (“Berlin Syndrome,” “Somersault”) and produced by Kevin Feige. The screenplay is by Eric Pearson (“Thor: Ragnarok”) and the story is by Jac Schaeffer (“WandaVision,” “The Hustle”) and Ned Benson (“The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Them”). Louis D’Esposito, Victoria Alonso, Brad Winderbaum, Nigel Gostelow and Scarlett Johansson are the executive producers. Brian Chapek (“Thor: Ragnarok” as associate producer) and Mitch Bell are co-producers.

The creative team includes director of photography Gabriel Beristain, ASC (“Agent Carter,” “Marvel One-Shot: Item 47”), BAFTA-nominated production designer Charles Wood (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Avengers: Infinity War”), editors Leigh Folsom Boyd, ACE (“Spider-Man: Far From Home,” “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales”) and Matthew Schmidt (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Captain America: Civil War”), BAFTA-winning costume designer Jany Temime (“Skyfall,” “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 and Part 2”), and BAFTA-winning visual effects supervisor Geoffrey Baumann (“Black Panther,” “Doctor Strange”). Music is by composer Lorne Balfe (“Mission: Impossible - Fallout,” “The Crown”).

Production for the spy thriller kicked off in Summer 2019, shooting on three continents over 87 days. Based in Pinewood Studios just outside of London, the film shot on location in the U.K., Norway, Budapest, Morocco and Atlanta. “Black Widow”—the first film in Phase Four of the Marvel Cinematic Universe—will launch simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+ with Premier Access in most Disney+ markets on July 9, 2021.

PAST TENSE

Journey to the Past Reveals New Secrets, Allies and an Unstoppable Nemesis

As filmmakers peeled back the layers of Natasha Romanoff, they realized they’d have to go back in time to offer insight into the character and how she became Black Widow. According to director Cate Shortland, the film had to address Natasha’s past with the MCU’s signature humor and action, while leaning into the emotional aspects. The challenge was in finding the right balance. “I knew that the film had to be fun,” Shortland says. “I love spectacle. I wanted Natasha to take off. I wanted people to watch this character fly—to watch her transcend.”

Among the discoveries in “Black Widow” is an unconventional family unit dating back to Natasha’s childhood. Joining Scarlett Johansson are Florence Pugh, David Harbour and

Rachel Weisz. Says Shortland, “We knew that humor and the family dynamic were just as important as her facing her past.”

Audiences are instantly swept back in time to see the family unit in action. “I wanted to make something that felt like a documentary,” says Shortland. “I wanted to hear the bugs buzzing—to feel so real that the audience would totally relate to it. It comes as a shock because it’s at the beginning of a Marvel Studios movie. It’s a beautiful look at what this family was and why the girls would be traumatized by losing it.”

The journey takes a deeper dive into not only Natasha’s life, but also the lives of the people from her past, revealing a host of new characters that have shaped Natasha’s life for better or worse.

Character Lineup:

NATASHA ROMANOFF, separated from the now-fractured Avengers, confronts the dark path she took to becoming a spy and an assassin, as well as events that followed. She reluctantly reunites with an unlikely group of spies from her past who share a critical part of her history, as well as a desire to stop a lethal force from being unleashed. But Natasha’s efforts are threatened by a deadly assassin whose unique skill set is unlike anything Natasha has ever faced.

“When you see Natasha in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, she’s often this kind of impenetrable force,” says Scarlett Johansson, who returns as Black Widow. “She’s reckless and out of control but still has this amazing intellect. What are her secrets? Her vulnerabilities? I am excited to share her fragility and her strength. She is in a male world, and she projects a certain way of being in that world. What we wanted to do is find out who is the real Black Widow.”

Adds director Cate Shortland, “The character has to unpack her life. She really wants to shut all those doors, and we throw them all open. Scarlett really thought about who Natasha is as a human, rather than just a Super Hero. Under all her bravado, she’s frightened. She comes into this film thinking she’s always going to be alone. She’s told herself that’s OK.”

Says Johansson, “I know a lot about this character, because she’s in me. But I haven’t really had the opportunity to access all the parts of her. Cate loves the idea of going inside this character. I’ve been able to make a lot of discoveries about her—to find different strengths and different flaws. It’s been pretty therapeutic. I can’t imagine that many actors have the opportunity to do that with a character they’ve played for 10 years.”

Screenwriter Eric Pearson says the character’s mysterious past was ripe with opportunity. “I hope people will be surprised to see the kind of benchmark moments in Natasha’s life that led to her being an Avenger,” he says. “We get to bring a lot of depth—to really fill out this character who’s chosen to remain in the shadows.”

There is no shortage of action, however. “I’m probably biased, but I think there are some of the best fights we’ve had in the MCU,” says Johansson. “They come from the

place of character. It's an important part of the storytelling to understand where Natasha is mentally in each fight."

The storytelling also guides the look of the character. According to costume designer Jany Temime, who was nominated for a BAFTA Award for her work on 2019's "Judy," creating the wardrobe for the character was a collaborative process. "Scarlett knows that character and her no-fuss personality," she says. "Natasha is a very strong woman but also somebody who's been hurt—that's what makes her human."

Temime made a key addition to the character's wardrobe. "For the first time, we have a white costume for Black Widow," says the costume designer. "Scarlett has an incredible white suit because she has to fight in Siberia. I looked at military outfits designed for the snow, and I thought, 'Why not?' I added black accessories to keep it tough. It works brilliantly. It's just gorgeous."

YOUNG NATASHA leads a normal life in suburban Ohio with her mom, dad and little sister, Yelena. Sporting blue hair and an old soul, Natasha is a little more grown up than her preteen counterparts, and she always keeps a close eye on her sister. Some days, she even imagines this could be her life forever.

Ever Anderson was cast to portray Young Natasha. "I would describe Young Nat as a tomboyish girl, a great student and someone who wants a normal life," says Anderson. "She had been through so much before coming to Ohio, so she just wants to forget about her past and start over."

Anderson says Natasha is very protective of her little sister. "I think Nat is very motherly with her sister," she says. "Yes, sometimes they squabble and fight, but in the end Natasha would do anything for Yelena because she really loves her."

YELENA BELOVA, a product of the Red Room's ruthless training program, has a secret history with the Black Widow that she is determined to address. When Yelena finds herself caught in a world with dangerous threats around every corner, her only chance at survival may be through a tenuous truce with the person she blames for a lifetime of torment—Natasha Romanoff. "Yelena doesn't care—she's going to speak her mind and she's not going to answer to anybody," says Shortland. "I think young women in the audience will be cheering because she doesn't have to excuse herself. That's what we got with this beautiful character."

Florence Pugh portrays the fiery assassin. "Yelena is hurt and complicated and acts out," says Pugh. "One of the coolest things about playing Yelena is just how complex and broken she is for someone who is so sure of what she does. She knows exactly how to function in the areas in which she's been trained, but she has no clue how to live as a human being. She's a lethal weapon but also a bit of a kid. That's been one of the nicest qualities about her."

Shortland, who saw Pugh in “Lady Macbeth,” was keen to work with the actress. “She’s really beguiling,” says the director. “She and Scarlett as a team are unstoppable. It was beautiful to see them together.”

Screenwriter Eric Pearson agrees. “We shot the scene where Natasha and Yelena are reuniting right at the beginning of production,” he says. “Natasha walks through a safe house in Budapest while they speak to each other—they haven’t seen each other yet. As they reveal themselves, they’re perfectly mirrored. As soon as I saw that, I thought, ‘We have a movie.’

“Yelena is the perfect counterpart to Natasha,” Pearson continues. “While Natasha is withdrawn, Yelena has achieved a level of emotional freedom. She’s outgoing, assertive and blunt—it throws Natasha off-kilter and brings out more of her personality.”

“I think Yelena wants someone to apologize,” says Pugh. “She wants to stop feeling like she’s insane. This isn’t normal, and she really wants to let everybody know that she did not have a choice in this. The whole of Yelena’s anger, and I suppose her journey, is just trying to get these people that she thought she knew so well to admit that what they did was wrong, and that she was abandoned.

“She doesn’t exactly fit,” continues Pugh. “That’s one of the charming things about her. She reacts instinctually. There’s nothing mysterious about her. She’s quite simply there to get the job done. I think her relationship with Natasha is interesting because they’re constantly butting heads in the way that siblings do. But she’s equally, deeply in pain. She’s had a very confusing childhood and I think she’s constantly searching for a way to patch herself up.”

Temime says the sisters’ costuming reflects their divergent personalities while offering a clue to the future. “I wanted to have different styles for these sisters,” she says. “Yelena’s suit is more down to earth; it’s not a Widow suit—it’s a fighter suit. And this is where we introduce the green vest. It’s Yelena’s vest before we see it on Natasha.”

YOUNG YELENA is thriving in an idyllic suburban household somewhere in Ohio. Her days are filled with family dinners and bicycle rides—as close to perfect as a little girl can get, save for an occasional skinned knee. Even then, her big sister is always there to make everything better—until she isn’t.

“Young Yelena is trusting and loving,” says Violet McGraw, who portrays the character. “She loves Natasha and looks up to her. They are a little competitive—mostly because Yelena wants to impress her big sister.”

MELINA is a highly trained spy who has been cycled through the Red Room’s Widow program four times. After various undercover missions, one of which involved a young Natasha Romanoff, the Red Room recognized Melina’s intelligence, making her one of their lead scientists. After decades of service, Melina has been able to distance herself from the Red Room, but when Natasha shows up Melina must decide where her allegiance lies. “She was recruited when she was very young,” says Rachel Weisz, who

portrays Melina in the film. “She became a Russian spy and was planted with Alexei and two very young children in America pretending to be a suburban family with a white picket fence. I think Melina was a lot happier in those years. I think her heart really hardened after that. She became hard and maybe a little bitter.”

According to Shortland, although Melina finds herself in a matriarchal role, she’s still a spy. “She would’ve thought of it as a job—but what happens if it becomes more than that? The reality is that it isn’t up to her. She’s part of the Red Room and becomes an apologist for that system.”

Costume designer Jany Temime had to create a diverse wardrobe for Melina ranging from suburban-mom style to overalls to a Widow costume. “She’s a mom from Ohio in 1995,” says Temime. “Then we jump in time and she has a pig farm in Russia, which gives way to her role as a powerful Widow. It’s a big jump, but Rachel carried it all brilliantly.”

Chapek says Weisz’s background in dramatic roles was an asset. “She brings a truthfulness and nuance to the character,” he says. “Melina has been part of this spy world—coming through the Red Room long before Natasha.”

For Weisz, it was a thrill to come on board as the brilliant Melina. “The Marvel Cinematic Universe is probably the most popular and far-reaching contemporary mythology that there is right now, and it was definitely exciting to be invited to join them,” she says.

ALEXEI/RED GUARDIAN, the Red Room’s answer to Captain America, is a super soldier and spy who lived a lifetime of triumph during the Cold War. Alexei’s years of espionage are behind him, but he still considers himself the ultimate hero. He loves sharing his greatness with those around him—which these days include fellow inmates in the Russian prison where he resides. Deep down—way deep down—he harbors a lot of guilt about his life as a spy, especially when it comes to Natasha Romanoff, whom he knew long before she became Black Widow.

“In the beginning, for Alexei, everyone is sort of a reflection of him,” says David Harbour, who portrays Red Guardian. “That’s the narcissist’s MO—he is not interested in anyone else. He's interested in how he’s reflected in their eyes. ‘So, am I cool? Am I strong? Do you like me? I know you do.’”

Director Cate Shortland confirms that Alexei is insecure—hiding behind his perceived power. But, she says, “I love the character—he’s like a big Russian bear. He’s a dad joke that does not end.”

Adds Harbour, “He grew up in the Soviet Union and was chosen for a program similar to the Americans’ Captain America. While the Americans were creating their hero, the Russians were developing the Red Guardian. The problem was that he did not become as famous as Captain America, and it’s the great tragedy of his life. He feels very unappreciated.”

Co-producer Brian Chapek says Harbour stepped into Alexei's shoes with ease. "People can't help but be drawn to him," says Chapek. "He has such an amazing fan following for his work on 'Stranger Things.' He has such a gritty empathy to him."

Harbour says the dichotomy of Alexei was appealing. "He's a very complicated guy," says the actor. "He's like this beastly guy who desperately wants to be liked. He wants people to think he's funny and charming. The zig and zag of the character in that way was so appealing to me: he is big and strong with all these human qualities."

Costume designer Jany Temime created two key costumes for Alexei. "He has a Russian prisoner costume," she says. "We made it a little too big, and it's dirty. It's as if he's been wearing it for 20 years.

"The Red Guardian costume is slightly tighter," Temime continues. "Alexei is a strong man, but it's been years since he's been in costume. It doesn't fit like it used to. So he struggles a little to put it on. But then he succeeds. In that costume, David walked differently. He wore it with lots of pride."

GENERAL DREYKOV was the ruthless leader of the Red Room, the secret spy organization that transformed Natasha Romanoff into the Black Widow. While the world believes this organization was destroyed years ago, the Red Room has been operating from the shadows with an army of ruthlessly effective Black Widow assassins to do its dirty work. Natasha Romanoff holds Dreykov responsible for her tortured past, and wants to put an end to his Red Room operations. But as she closes in on him, General Dreykov summons all of the forces at his disposal to stop the assassin he created.

Filmmakers turned to Ray Winstone to bring Natasha's tormentor to life. "Dreykov is a guy who came from old Russia," says Winstone. "I think he was a man who started off with great intentions, but like most people who are put into that kind of situation, the greed and the power take over."

"Ray Winstone fit the bill perfectly," says Chapek. "The second he walks into the room he has such gravitas to him. What's interesting is we are actually introduced to a younger Dreykov in a sequence in Cuba in the mid '90s—a moment that shapes the future of a lot of people."

TASKMASTER is a masked assassin who carries out deadly missions on behalf of the Red Room. Armed with the ability to mimic his enemies' every move, the calculating and formidable Taskmaster will stop at nothing until he accomplishes his mission. "He has this ability called photographic reflexes—so if he fights you once he knows how to emulate your style," says executive producer Brad Winderbaum. "Natasha's tricks might work in their first altercation, but by round two and three he knows everything, and she has to come up with something else."

Director Cate Shortland hints that Taskmaster has a connection with Natasha's past. "In some ways, the Taskmaster is the living embodiment of Natasha's backstory," says the director.

To create the costume for the nimble assassin, Temime and her team had to ensure the garments could move. “We were quite obsessed with making it light so that he could jump and roll and do all of the acrobatics needed,” she says. “The armor, helmet and hood are as light as we could make them. I was very happy with the technical success of the costume—it was one of the first costumes we worked on.”

MASON is a man of mystery with a can-do attitude. In truth, he’s a former soldier turned international smuggler who’s paying a debt to Natasha Romanoff after she rescued him from a Cambodian prison. Nonetheless, their bond is unmistakable. His ability to deliver on even the most far-fetched requests is admirable, though he’s often caught sleeping on the job.

“When we meet Natasha and Mason, we realize that they have this rapport—even though they have not seen each other for many years,” says co-producer Brian Chapek. “They have this chemistry. It was very important to Cate that we see someone in Natasha’s past life who understands her in a way that the Avengers might not have.

“Mason is a new character to the Marvel Universe,” continues Chapek. “He is basically a fixer in our movie. We needed someone who could be charming, strong and intelligent, and be on the same playing field as Natasha. O-T Fagbenle is just that—he is an incredible actor.”

Fagbenle was excited to join the Marvel Cinematic Universe and work with Shortland. “She is such an auteur, and the movies she has done are so moving and meaningful,” says Fagbenle of the director. “The confluence of her style with the scope of Marvel was really intriguing to me. Cate has a facility with emotional nuance between characters. I think it comes partly because she is a very grounded human being.”

THE WIDOWS are the up-and-coming spy assassins who’ve seemingly come from the same program that trained Natasha. The idea that the Red Room might still exist is painful for Natasha, and the existence of an army of ruthless warriors might also prove problematic.

There are 22 Widows that feature in the film, including actresses, stuntwomen, dancers and martial arts practitioners from different parts of the world. “In dealing with an organization like the Red Room, we wanted to expand upon that mythology, and in doing so, introduce a whole new group of Widows,” says Chapek. “One of the most amazing experiences throughout this whole process was seeing these characters come to life in one room together.”

When casting the Widows, the filmmakers were looking for diverse skill sets. “We were looking for people with all types of martial arts, Wushu-based skills, judo and kickboxing,” says stunt coordinator Rob Inch. “We made sure they all had a signature in their own fighting skills.”

The production not only took stunts to a new level, it redefined what a set on an MCU film looked like. “It was striking how many stuntwomen we had on set at any given time,” says Scarlett Johansson. “The power of these women in one room together was something I’d never experienced before. It was an amazing feeling to be surrounded by all these badass women and be able to get down and dirty with them. It was great.”

SETTING THE STAGE
Filmmakers Create Compelling Backdrop for Action-Packed Spy Thriller

Marvel Studios' "Black Widow" filmed on location in Norway, Budapest, Morocco, Atlanta and in the U.K., capturing the gritty, worldly locales that helped set the stage for the story. According to co-producer Brian Chapek, filmmakers wanted the film to feel broad and worldly to reflect Natasha's history. "Being a globe-trotting spy film, it was important that we place Natasha in real-world environments—places that could not be replicated on backlots. It was important to achieve that sense of reality to actually go to many of these places and shoot it for real."

For those sequences that couldn't be done on location—and building on many that were—an extraordinary team of artists and technicians was called on to conceptualize and create a host of sets at Pinewood Studios just outside of London, ranging from the mysterious Red Room to the interior of a helicopter. Additional sets were built at Cardington Studios, located just over 50 miles from London.

Director of photography Gabriel Beristain is no stranger to Marvel Studios, contributing additional photography to a host of films including the "Iron Man" trilogy, "The Avengers," "Guardians of the Galaxy," "Thor: The Dark World," and "Thor: Ragnarok." "Black Widow" marks his first Marvel Studios feature as DOP—but Beristain was able to hit the ground running, bringing the signature MCU style to the high-octane action while infusing director Cate Shortland's sensibilities into the deeper character moments. Says Beristain, "I have always believed that the Marvel Cinematic Universe is rooted in a wonderful artistic conception—Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby—the greatest artists of the Marvel Comics tradition were great storytellers. Following their work made 'Black Widow' a tremendous film experience.

"Cate Shortland and I were extremely keen on the perfect combination of elements that gave life to the unique language of the film," continues Beristain. "We took every element and gave it the importance it deserves in the film narrative. Shot composition and camera work, light, shadow and color were often starting points. The script was evolving constantly, but conceptually it was very solid. Eric Pearson and I have worked together many times in the past, and we developed a shorthand language that is refreshing. We took many interesting creative risks in 'Agent Carter,' and we did it even more with 'Black Widow.' We believed and celebrated film language in all its majestic complexity and beauty."

According to Beristain, the emotional undercurrent of the story was always top of mind. "Cate and I took our cameras close to the emotion, while respecting the performance process," he says. "By using our three cameras and very little intrusive lighting, we took the audience as close as possible to those moments when the audience needed to have an emotional investment in the character. 'Black Widow' will make people forget for moments that they are in a fictional world—they'll come very close to the characters' emotions, their plights and predicaments."

Production designer Charles Wood is also part of the Marvel Studios family, serving as production designer for six feature films within the MCU prior to "Black Widow," including

“Thor: The Dark World,” “Guardians of the Galaxy,” “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” “Doctor Strange,” “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Avengers: Endgame.” Wood’s next Marvel Studios feature, “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,” recently wrapped production.

Wood says he’s typically given a broad playing field when it comes to building the worlds within the MCU. While there are occasional cues from the comics, the worlds he helps create are fresh and wholly driven by the storytelling. “We have a lot of design freedom,” he says. “That comes from the nature of what these films are—they’re all so different. There’s no bookending to any of it. From a design aspect, it’s very liberating.”

Complementing their efforts is the visual effects team, headed by VFX supervisor Geoffrey Baumann, whose wealth of experience and imagination created stunning effects alongside more subtle efforts that expanded practical locales, added digital backdrops, bolstered action sequences and built digital elements. Baumann worked in the same capacity on Marvel Studios’ 2018 blockbuster “Black Panther.” His credits within the MCU also include “Doctor Strange,” “Captain America: Civil War,” “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” “Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” “Iron Man 3” and “The Avengers.”

Baumann knew, however, that this new film would be different. “I believe ‘Black Widow’ has a tactile spy-thriller feel to it that is different than any other films in the MCU,” he says. “Because of this, much of the VFX needed a real-world feel that the audience could relate to. Replicating real-world environments or drawing on images from the Cold War allowed us to keep this illusion going. It was a tremendous collaboration between all departments but most critically for us in VFX was the relationship with production design. Taking the real-world locations that inspired the sets allowed us to blend between sets and CG extension relatively seamlessly.”

ON LOCATION

According to Jamie Lengyel, supervising locations manager, the goal from the beginning was to showcase Natasha’s history as an international spy. “We wanted to find locations that would give the film a real international flavor and put Natasha in some incredible environments that contribute both to the story and to her character,” he says.

Adds Wood, “You could never build all of these places. And you’d never find them all in one location. We can do some pretty clever things, but to go to these cities—from Tangier to Budapest—is really the only way to do it if you want to capture scale.”

Norway

We find Natasha Romanoff in Norway for good reason, says co-producer Brian Chapek. “Secretary Ross is hunting Natasha down for breaking the Sokovia Accords,” he says. “She finds her way to Norway where she has a lot of soul searching to do. She’s a fugitive on the run—but that’s just the beginning of her problems.”

The film shot for two days in a little fishing port called Sæbø and then moved to the Trollstigen Valley. “Sæbø is the town close to Natasha’s trailer, her safe house,” says Lengyl. “She takes the car ferry and we see these incredible fjords of Norway.

“We chose Norway because it gave us these vast landscapes and particularly the nature, it brought out so much of where Natasha was in her life and a turning point for her,” continues Lengyel. “We filmed in these incredible mountains in Trollstigen Valley.”

Budapest

The film takes Natasha to Budapest, a city where she once participated in a mission with Clint Barton. Says Scarlett Johansson, “When we first started talking about locations—back when everything was possible—we all agreed that we had to find out what happened in Budapest. I think Natasha is haunted. She has this huge sense of doom. There’s unfinished business and a sense of guilt that follows her around, and it all stems from what happened in Budapest. The film is not about what happened in Budapest, but it helps us understand the heaviness that Natasha walks around with and what her burden is. It gave us a great jumping-off point for a lot that goes on in the film.”

According to Chapek, Natasha is drawn to Budapest despite her history there. “What leads her to Budapest is a very important MacGuffin with a clue that reminds her of her past—a sign that comes from Yelena, who she realizes is in Budapest. They haven’t seen each other for 20 years.”

Johansson adds that the city itself offered ample opportunity. “Budapest is such a beautiful city, and it felt like an iconic place that we might get into all of these crazy situations,” she says. “It’s visually very exciting and gives a flavor that the Marvel Cinematic Universe has never really explored before—this great Eastern European vibe, which is so fun.”

Shooting included the exterior of the Budapest safe house where Natasha is reunited with her sister Yelena, as well as the subsequent pursuit of Yelena and Natasha by the Widow assassins and eventually Taskmaster. The chase takes place on rooftops and through dynamic city streets, including on motorcycles through Budapest with huge armored vehicles. Says Florence Pugh, “It was crazy hot. We are on a motorbike as Taskmaster is coming after us in a huge tank. I am sure we shocked quite a lot of people but it was a lot of fun and it gives the film that energy straight away. It moves the entire storyline into the main part of the film.”

The production filmed for two weeks in Budapest—from the streets to the top of the Exchange Palace, which once was the Budapest Stock Exchange. Locations also included the Keleti (eastern) train station, the Nyugati (western) station underground and a gas station where Natasha and Yelena recover after the big chase. “We were able to use these iconic locations in a very practical way,” says Johansson, “which is really fun because you don’t have to use as much CG. You can really do it.”

Morocco

The second unit filmed for two weeks in Tangier with Pugh for a sequence that features Yelena on a complex mission early in the film that changes everything for the character. For designer Charles Wood, shooting in Tangier provided the scale called for in the sequence. “We felt we had to film on location in a city like this to get the dimension, the right texture and the right history,” he says.

Atlanta

"Black Widow" reveals that Natasha's past includes three years in a fabricated family structure, complete with spy parents and a little sister. Those family sequences were filmed in Atlanta—where production designer Charles Wood's team created the Ohio suburban backdrop for the family's activities. A local street in Chamblee provided the look of 1990s architecture for exterior shots. Interior scenes with the faux family were also captured in Atlanta.

United Kingdom

With the production based in the U.K., the location department also had to find locations to pass for a host of various locales. Hankley Common doubled for the Russian wilderness, providing the vast exterior landscape surrounding Melina's farmhouse—military barracks nearby were transformed into the exterior of Melina's homestead.

Dunsfold Aerodrome served as an Ohio airfield. The art department spent months growing grasses and laying the road and putting up poly tunnels, which could be lit at night. As one of the biggest sets of the film, it took six weeks for the art department to create.

RAF Upper Heyford Park became a Cuban airfield. A bridge in Scotland—paired with highly choreographed shots captured onset at Cardington Studios—doubled as a key Norwegian site where Natasha first encounters the Taskmaster.

COMPLETING THE PICTURE

There were 64 different sets built in both interior and exterior locations, including the spy family home, the Norway bridge, Yelena's apartment, the Gulag yard and catwalk, Melina's farmhouse and the Red Room—including cells, corridors and Dreykov's office. For the helicopter scenes, the filmmakers used an Mi-8, a Russian helicopter used for military and commercial use. "They are highly complicated to build and we knew we needed four, so we found them in Hungary, bought the shells and brought them back to the U.K. where we rebuilt the cockpits and painted them," says Wood.

Spy Family Home

The sequences in the spy family home showcase an important turning point in Natasha's story, while introducing key players in her past. Filmmakers take the audience to the Ohio suburbs where Natasha has been living for a few years with her faux family, including sister Yelena, mom Melina and dad Alexei. Their home is designed to mimic classic Americana, complete with a curious collection of family photos—and is a big part of their cover. It is likely the only home Yelena remembers—and it nearly gave Natasha hope for a normal life. So, when they're all forced to flee, emotions are high.

VFX supervisor Geoffrey Baumann collaborated with multiple teams to ensure that emotion came through during a dramatic escape sequence that involves a perilous drive, a touch-and-go airplane takeoff while being pursued, and a heartbreaking end to their family. "These few scenes were our anchors," says Baumann. "It was the set up for the film and led us straight to the title sequence."

Baumann and his team provided what he calls "relatively straight forward VFX" to the scenes at home, including adding lightning bugs and taking actors Rachel Weisz and David Harbour back in time with makeup and visual effects. "After leaving the neighborhood, the journey is

comprised of about five or six driving locations that were primarily shot around Rome, Georgia," says Baumann. "These driving plates were a combination of multi camera arrays as well as drive-by and tracking shots. Turning off of the main road in Georgia allowed us to then transition to a location in London that served as the farm where their plane takes off.

"The entire sequence was boarded per Cate's direction," continues Baumann. "We then created an animatic keeping the first portion of the home as boards. The second beat of the driving journey was then supplemented with photos of potential locations where we could shoot the driving plates. The arrival to the farm and subsequent pursuit were previsedd. This action beat was the most complex and consisted of both main and second unit nights in the U.K."

Norwegian Bridge

Natasha and Taskmaster face off in an intense battle sequence near her Norwegian hideout. Filmmakers found the look they wanted with the Ballachulish Bridge in Scotland. But shutting down an active bridge for weeks wasn't feasible—not to mention the special effects needed for the scene. A third of the bridge was recreated at Cardington Studios, and the visual effects team created the rest of it in CG.

Yelena's Budapest Apartment

One of the key set builds was Yelena's Budapest apartment, where Natasha shows up and does something of a dance with her long-lost sister before the iconic fight ensues. "We needed to first find the exterior of the apartment in Budapest on which the interior was based," says Wood. "Once we found that we designed the set, creating a series of rooms that the camera could flow through. There are plenty of hidden doorways and reveals."

Director of photography Gabriel Beristain says the sequence aptly illustrates the lighting approach. "We let the light enter the acting areas from outside the windows and from as far from the sets as possible," says Beristain, who's long been inspired by English cinematographer David Watkin's approach to lighting. "This single-source light refracts through windows of spaces with as little as possible invasion of the set. Directors and actors appreciate the technique, and the lighting has a very unique naturalistic look."

Gulag Yard/Catwalk

The biggest set build was the Gulag yard and catwalk, built on the backlot at Pinewood. "The design was based on an old nuclear reactor core," says production designer Charles Wood. "It's meant to look like a repurposed space—an old Soviet nuclear station that had become defunct over the years and now houses these dangerous prisoners."

The VFX team came in later to extend that world, surrounding the Gulag set with mountains and glacial snow to drive home the Siberian locale. The team also added a digital helicopter in wide shots to showcase Alexei's escape.

Melina's Farmhouse

According to the story, Melina's residence is located in a vast expanse in Eastern Europe. Says Wood, "We got a lot of reference from Russian farm buildings and created the space around that. We wanted to create environments where the camera could find objective views,

so the multiple room environments offered freedom to move the camera and create nice compositions as these characters come back together.

“This is a story about this family getting torn apart and coming back together—it’s very human,” continues Wood. “It relies on the honesty of these people coming together—how broken they are and how they have to mend themselves.”

Red Room

The Red Room is a mysterious program where spies and assassins, including Natasha Romanoff, are brainwashed and trained. Its actual location is unknown—even to Natasha. Says Wood, “When we were creating the structures for the Red Room, we wanted to make sure that from the audience’s point of view, you don’t know where you actually are.

“We wanted to create a world that was based from an earlier period,” Wood continues. “In our story, the Red Room itself was built during the space race in the 1960s. We created a retro look with a lot of architectural references from the ’60s, ’70s and early ’80s.”

As part of the Red Room, Wood’s team designed a sophisticated and high-tech office for Dreykov.

FIGHTS, FALLS & FLYING

Filmmakers Tap Powerhouse Stunt Team for Action-Packed Adventure

“Black Widow” is full of action, featuring street stunts with cars and motorcycles, skydiving and extraordinary fight scenes that were both thrilling and emotional. Every fight scene, says co-producer Brian Chapek, adds to the story. “Unless you deliver a fight that expands upon the character, it’s not going to be interesting to the fans so in this movie that’s what we tried to do,” he says.

Cast members Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh, Rachel Weisz and David Harbour all had extensive stunt and fight training to be able to perform as much of the action and fight sequences themselves as possible. Stunt coordinator Rob Inch and fight coordinator James Young spearheaded the film’s stunts and fights.

Young has worked on a host of Marvel Studios films, while Inch’s background includes films like “Wonder Woman 1984,” “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story” and “Captain America: The First Avenger.” He says director Cate Shortland built on their experience. “It was great to have somebody who let you flow with your creative ideas while bringing really different artistic elements to it that we wouldn’t have tried ourselves. She’d see something and tweak it in an artistic and stylized way.”

“Black Widow” marks Young’s sixth Marvel Studios film he’s done with Johansson, including “Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” “Captain America: Civil War,” “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Avengers: Endgame.” “Scarlett is so good at taking direction and translating that to screen,” he says. “I don’t need to worry about her, as previous stunt doubles have trained her well. Fighting is high-performance acting, and Scarlett is a veteran at this. She just gets it straight away.”

But, Young points out, the character's style of fighting has evolved over the years. "Natasha was trained in the Red Room but has spent a few years working with the Avengers, so we have interjected a little bit of what we feel she might have picked up from them. In this film you are dealing with Natasha having to use real hand-to-hand combat skills."

According to Inch, Johansson's instinct about the character was inspiring. "Scarlett came to our stunt rehearsals very clear on what she felt was within her character and what wasn't," says Inch.

Says Johansson about Natasha, "She has no superpowers, so it's all coming from her. I've had all this time to build this physical vocabulary, and I'm finally able to use all of it in this film. It was really exciting, and I'm so happy with how it all came out."

Like Johansson, Pugh had extensive training before getting to the set, including kickboxing, knife training, Tae Kwon Do and stunt training. "Working with Florence was an absolute treat," says Young. "She definitely has an understanding of the action. She has a dancer's mind and gets choreography very quickly."

Adds Pugh, "It's been really fun to get involved and learn new skills. It's a massive part of the film, and if you are up for it they are very excited about getting you in as much as possible. Yelena is feisty, her fighting is quick and powerful and she will do the job now as opposed to making it pretty. That's definitely a character attribute that I've clung to throughout the film."

SIBLING RIVALRY

Pugh's first week of filming—her first time being on set with Johansson—happened to be the fight sequence between Natasha and Yelena when they reunite for the first time since they were separated as children. "Within two days of knowing Scarlett, I was ramming her into a doorframe or a kitchen counter," says Pugh. "It was the best way to get to know someone pretty quickly—just fight them for a week."

Says Inch, "We hoped to get Scarlett and Florence together to rehearse the fight sequence but we couldn't fit it in. It was interesting, they both bounced off each other and energized each other. Hopefully, audiences will see that in the film."

The intense and creative choreography makes it unique—even within the Marvel Cinematic Universe. "It's gritty, visceral and supercharged with a lot of emotion and history, as these two have not seen each other for 20 years," says Young. "Anyone who has fought with a sibling knows that it really becomes something more than a fight. It's a lot more primal, there is a lot more at stake, and the only way it will end is when one of them gives up."

Adds Shortland, "Yelena has never forgiven Natasha for leaving her. She really wants to punish her. Their fight in the apartment is about punishment and testing their trust for each other. It allows the audience to understand the relationship between two people on a really deep level—and to make it fun."

TASKMASTER CLASH
Another key fight scene is between Natasha and Taskmaster on the bridge in Norway. “It’s the first time we see Natasha on her back foot,” says Inch. “She throws all her signature moves in the fight, but Taskmaster counters them and does them back to her—he reads her moves. You almost wish Natasha would stay down—it’s the first time we see Natasha face defeat.”

Young found Taskmaster was the hardest character to choreograph. “You have a character who can replicate what you are doing and use your moves against you,” he says. “The challenge was how to keep the fight engaging and not repetitive.”

RED GUARDIAN
David Harbour also trained extensively with the stunt team for all his fighting scenes, learning a particular Soviet martial art and combat sport called Sambo. Says Harbour, “I have never worked with such an amazing stunt team. I wish they could have done it all themselves, as they are much better than me, but I guess it’s occasionally nice to see my face.”

Alexei’s first fight sequence is in the Gulag when Natasha and Yelena come to break him out. “Alexei wants to fight but he is a bit rough around the edges,” says Young.

(UNDER)SCORING THE STORY
Filmmakers Call on Lorne Balfe to Create Moving Score

Marvel Studios’ “Black Widow” offers the MCU’s signature action with a raw, emotional core. Composer Lorne Balfe was called on to provide a score that would capture the story’s unique approach. “From the very beginning, [director] Cate Shortland had a very distinct vision for what the music needed to do for the film,” says co-producer Brian Chapek. “If this was going to be a movie that told Natasha’s journey through life, then it was hugely important that the score helped tell this story in a beautiful and truthful way.

“From the first time we sat down with Lorne in his booth and he played a few melodies that would become the backbone of Natasha’s sound, we were hooked,” continues Chapek. “It was perfect. Natasha is such an internal character that Lorne’s music was one of the many devices that allowed us to peer inside her soul and understand her on a level we’ve never seen before. Lorne ended up creating an incredible score that was intimate, epic and everything in between.”

According to Balfe, from the moment he first watched the reels he felt Natasha needed a musical heritage. “I wanted to introduce the soundtrack of her story,” he says. “I listened to a lot of Russian folk music—it’s a very particular sound. This music is the ghost of the past that is always with her.”

Balfe wrote folk music that helped define Natasha from a musical point of view. “The instrumental DNA includes balalaikas, duduks, dombras and hurdy-gurdies,” he says.

“In addition to these instruments of that geographical place, we also needed it to have a female voice.”

The composer achieved this through a 20-piece female choir. He also included a nod to the melody Alan Silvestri previously created for Black Widow in Avengers films. “It’s always a joy to touch what’s a holy grail of themes—it’s subtle, but it’s a good Easter egg.”

Natasha’s sister, says Balfe, called for a different approach. “I wanted to create a contrasting musical backstory for Yelena to make sure they both had a clear journey,” he says. “I listened to a lot of the Red Army music—it’s very haunting. It’s easy to think of it as very strident and manly, but it’s actually quite quiet and very emotional.”

Yelena’s theme included a 40-piece men’s choir. “Just because it’s a feminine character doesn’t mean we need a feminine voice accompanying it,” says Balfe. “I wanted a contrast between those characters.”

Balfe also created a theme that connects the spy family—Natasha, Yelena, Melina and Alexei—as well as the Widows, which he calls an “assassin theme.”

For Alexei, Balfe decided not to lean into the humor the character brings. “We treat the Red Guardian deadly serious because in his head there is nothing comedic about what he’s doing. I think he has a running soundtrack in his head.” Balfe imagined that Red Guardian, who has his own action figure, would assume that melody as his own. “That’s his soundtrack,” says Balfe, who was inspired by Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich.

Led by conductor Gavin Greenaway, the score was recorded at Abbey Road Studios with—at 118 musicians—one of the largest orchestras to record there. “We wanted to make sure the score was very powerful for the action sequences,” says Balfe, who used a smaller orchestra to capture the intimacy of the more emotional moments.

Both choirs, Balfe adds, sing in Russian. “The Russian language sounds a bit hard or aggressive, but there’s something very magical about it—something beautiful and rustic.”

ABOUT THE CAST

SCARLETT JOHANSSON (Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow & Executive Producer) is a Tony Award® and BAFTA Award winner, two-time Oscar® nominee and five-time Golden Globe® nominee. She was most recently seen in the final installment of the Avengers film series, "Avengers: Endgame," reprising her role as Natasha Romanoff aka Black Widow; in the Golden Globe–nominated "Marriage Story," directed by Noah Baumbach; and in Taika Waititi's "Jojo Rabbit." Other recent roles include "Avengers: Infinity War," "Lucy," "Under the Skin," "Ghost in the Shell," "Isle of Dogs" and "Her," which earned her a best actress award at the Rome Film Festival.

Johansson received rave reviews as Nicole Barber in "Marriage Story," and was nominated for an Oscar®, a Golden Globe®, a Screen Actors Guild Award® and a BAFTA Award for her role. She also received nominations for an Oscar, a Screen Actors Guild Award and a BAFTA for her role in "Jojo Rabbit." Johansson received the Upstream Prize for best actress in the Controcorrente section at the Venice International Film Festival for her starring role opposite Bill Murray in director Sofia Coppola's critically acclaimed "Lost in Translation." Johansson won a Tony® for her Broadway debut in the Arthur Miller play "A View from a Bridge" opposite Liev Schreiber. She wrapped her second run on Broadway as Maggie in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" in 2013.

At the age of 12, Johansson attained worldwide recognition for her performance as Grace MacLean, the teen traumatized by a riding accident in Robert Redford's "The Horse Whisperer." She went on to star in Terry Zwigoff's "Ghost World," garnering a best supporting actress award from the Toronto Film Critics Circle. Her breakthrough role came at the age of 10 in the critically praised "Manny & Lo," which earned her an Independent Spirit Award nomination for best female lead.

Johansson's other film credits include: "Hail, Caesar!," "The Jungle Book," "Sing," "Chef," "Marvel's The Avengers," "Don Jon," "Hitchcock," "We Bought a Zoo," "Iron Man 2," "In Good Company," "A Love Song for Bobby Long," "Match Point," "He's Just Not That Into You," "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," "The Other Boleyn Girl," "The Spirit," "Girl with a Pearl Earring," "The Island," "The Black Dahlia," "The Prestige," "The Nanny Diaries," "North," "Just Cause" and "The Man Who Wasn't There."

A New York native, Johansson made her professional acting debut at the age of 8 in the Off-Broadway production of “Sophistry,” with Ethan Hawke, at New York’s Playwrights Horizons.

FLORENCE PUGH (Yelena Belova) is an Academy Award®–nominated British actress who’s come a long way since her breakout role in William Oldroyd’s critically acclaimed 2017 film “Lady Macbeth.”

Pugh recently wrapped production on director Olivia Wilde’s film “Don’t Worry Darling.” Wilde, Harry Styles and Gemma Chan co-star alongside Pugh in the psychological thriller that finds Pugh playing a 1950s housewife who discovers her husband’s (Styles) disturbing secrets. The film will be distributed by Warner Bros.

Up next, Pugh begins production in Ireland on the film adaptation of Emma Donoghue’s novel “The Wonder.” Sebastián Lelio will direct, and Alice Birch has penned the screenplay alongside Donoghue. Set in the late 1850s, the story follows an English nurse who goes to a tiny village in Ireland to observe what some view as a medical anomaly and others consider a miracle: a young girl who has survived without food for months. As tourists flock to the cabin of the 11-year-old to witness the bizarre occurrence, a journalist is sent to cover the sensation.

Pugh will then go into production alongside Morgan Freeman on Zach Braff’s “A Good Person.” The film will follow Allison (Pugh), whose life falls apart following her involvement in a fatal accident. In the following years, it is the unlikely relationship she forms with her would-be father-in-law (Freeman) that helps her live a life worth living. Braff will write and direct.

Pugh will also produce and star in Universal’s upcoming murder mystery film “The Maid,” which is currently in development.

In December 2019 Pugh starred as Amy March in Greta Gerwig’s adaptation of “Little Women.” Adapted from Louisa May Alcott’s classic novel of the same name, the coming-of-age feature centered on four sisters during the Civil War era in Massachusetts after leaving their family home. Pugh received an Oscar® nomination for her performance in the film in the category of best performance by an actress in a supporting role, a British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award nomination in the category of best actress in a supporting role, and a Critics’ Choice Movie Award nomination in the category of best supporting actress.

In July 2019 Pugh starred in A24’s cult classic horror film “Midsommar,” directed by Ari Aster. Pugh was nominated in the category of best actress for the 2019 Gotham Independent Film Awards and was awarded the Virtuoso Award at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Earlier the same year, Pugh had the lead role in MGM and WWE Studios’ “Fighting With My Family,” based on the life of WWE wrestler Paige, written and directed by Stephen Merchant. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

Pugh also starred in AMC's "The Little Drummer Girl," which launched in October 2018 on BBC in the U.K. and November 2018 in the U.S. Based on the John le Carré bestseller of the same name, the six-part drama is set in the 1970s as a young, brilliant actress prepares for her ultimate role in the theater of the real, and against the backdrop of rising tensions in the Middle East. Park Chan-wook directs, and Alexander Skarsgaard and Michael Shannon have co-lead roles.

Pugh was the female lead in director's David Mackenzie's "Outlaw King," which premiered on Netflix in 2018. "Outlaw King" told the story of Robert the Bruce, the king who led his country to freedom from the oppressive rule of England during the First War of Scottish Independence. The film also starred Chris Pine and Aaron Taylor-Johnson.

Pugh first made her mark with her starring role as Katherine Lester in Roadside's "Lady Macbeth." Directed by William Oldroyd, the film follows Katherine, who has been sold into marriage, as she discovers an unstoppable desire within herself when she enters into an affair with a worker on her estate. The film was named one of 2017's Top 10 Independent Films by the National Board of Review and won Best British Independent Film at the 2017 British Independent Film Awards. Pugh won best actress at the 2017 British Independent Film Awards and received the Malone Souliers Award for breakthrough of the year at the 2017 Evening Standard British Film Awards for her performance.

Pugh has also been seen in a starring role in ITV's critical hit "Marcella," an eight-part crime thriller from the creators of the Scandinavian hit series "The Bridge"; the action film "The Commuter" opposite Liam Neeson; and as Cordelia opposite Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson in the BBC/Amazon television movie "King Lear."

She made her stunning debut in Carol Morley's "The Falling," which earned her a best young performer nomination at the London Critics' Circle Film Awards.

RACHEL WEISZ (Melina) is an Academy Award®–winning actress known for portraying complex women, often combining vulnerability and strength in equal measure. Driven by great storytelling and a desire to work with visionary filmmakers, Weisz has added producer to her credits as she seeks out and develops engaging material with bold characters and authentic voices.

In her first major foray into television, Weisz headlines and executive produces "Dead Ringers," a reimagining of David Cronenberg's cult classic 1980s film with a gender swap. Amazon has given a straight-to-series order to the project from Weisz, Alice Birch (lead writer of Hulu's acclaimed "Normal People" series), Annapurna Television and Morgan Creek Entertainment. It is tentatively scheduled to debut in 2022.

Weisz will produce and star in "Lanny," the film adaptation of the eponymous Max Porter novel, which The New Yorker calls "a hybrid morality tale about environmental awareness, parenthood, and growing up."

Weisz is also set to star as Elizabeth Taylor in “A Special Relationship.” The story will be told through the lens of Taylor’s friendship with her assistant Roger Wall, exploring Taylor’s journey from actress to activist. The feature is produced by See-Saw Films’ Iain Canning and Emile Sherman based on the screenplay written by Academy Award® winner Simon Beaufoy.

In 2018 Weisz produced and starred in Sebastián Lelio’s “Disobedience” alongside Rachel McAdams and Alessandro Nivola. The film, which is based on the novel by Naomi Alderman, premiered at the 2017 Toronto Film Festival to critical acclaim and was released by Bleecker Street. Also that year, Weisz starred in Yorgos Lanthimos’ “The Favourite,” alongside Emma Stone, Olivia Colman and Nicholas Hoult. The film received wide acclaim, earning Weisz a BAFTA Award for best supporting actress, and Academy Award®, Golden Globe® and Screen Actors Guild Award® nominations for her performance.

In 2014 Weisz executive produced “Radiator,” Tom Browne’s directorial debut starring Richard Johnson, Gemma Jones and Daniel Cerqueira. The film debuted at the London Film Festival and received several festival awards including the Special Jury Prize at the Sarasota Film Festival.

In 2005 Weisz earned a Screen Actors Guild Award®, a Golden Globe® Award and an Academy Award® for her performance in Fernando Meirelles’ “The Constant Gardener.” In 2012 she received a Golden Globe nomination for her performance in Terence Davies’ “The Deep Blue Sea.” Her performance also earned her best actress awards from the New York Film Critics Circle and the Toronto Film Critics Association.

Weisz’s diverse film work includes “The Mercy,” “My Cousin Rachel,” “Denial,” “Complete Unknown,” “The Light Between Oceans,” “Youth,” “The Lobster,” “Agora,” “The Brothers Bloom,” “My Blueberry Nights,” “The Lovely Bones,” “Definitely Maybe,” “The Whistleblower,” “The Bourne Legacy,” “Oz the Great and Powerful,” “The Shape of Things,” “The Fountain,” “Runaway Jury,” “About a Boy,” “Enemy at the Gates,” “Constantine,” “Stealing Beauty,” “The Mummy” and “The Mummy Returns.”

Weisz starred in the Off-Broadway production of the Public Theater’s “Plenty,” and on Broadway in Mike Nichols’ “Betrayal.” She won the Laurence Olivier Award in the category of best actress for her performance as Blanche DuBois in the West End revival of Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire.”

DAVID HARBOUR (Alexei/Red Guardian) is an award-winning actor who’s gained a reputation as one of the most versatile actors around, consistently delivering compelling performances on film, television and stage.

Harbour stars in “No Sudden Move,” an upcoming American crime thriller film directed by Steven Soderbergh, alongside a stellar ensemble cast of Don Cheadle, Benicio del Toro, Jon Hamm, Ray Liotta, Kieran Culkin, Brendan Fraser, Noah Jupe, Julia Fox and Amy Seimetz. Set in 1955 in Detroit, “No Sudden Move” centers on a group of small-time criminals who are hired to steal what they think is a simple document. When their

plan goes horribly wrong, their search for who hired them–and for what ultimate purpose–weaves them through all echelons of the race-torn, rapidly changing city. It makes its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival on June 18, 2021, and is scheduled to be released on July 1, 2021, by HBO Max.

For his role as Chief Jim Hopper in Netflix's smash hit "Stranger Things," Harbour has been nominated for an Emmy®, a Golden Globe®, a SAG Award®, and a Critics' Choice Award. He won the 2016 SAG Award as part of the ensemble, and won the 2018 Critics' Choice Award for best supporting actor in a drama series. Season three of the show premiered July 4, 2019, and over 40.7 million household accounts tuned in within the first four days of its global launch, which is more than any other film or series in its first four days. He is in production on season four.

Harbour was recently seen in the Netflix action film "Extraction" opposite Chris Hemsworth. The film was produced by Joe and Anthony Russo and is the directorial debut of stunt coordinator Sam Hargrave. Harbour also starred in the surreal comedy mockumentary short film "Frankenstein's Monster's Monster, Frankenstein" directed by Daniel Gray Longino and written by John Levenstein. It was released on Netflix July 16, 2019, to rave reviews praising Harbour's comedic performance.

A Tony® nominee for the revival of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," Harbour's other theater credits include "Fifth of July," "Glengarry Glen Ross," "The Merchant of Venice," Tom Stoppard's "The Invention of Love" and "The Coast of Utopia" at Lincoln Center Theater.

Additional film credits include the action thriller "Sleepless"; David Ayer's DC blockbuster "Suicide Squad" with Will Smith, Jared Leto and Margot Robbie; Scott Cooper's "Black Mass" opposite Johnny Depp, Benedict Cumberbatch and Joel Edgerton; "The Equalizer" opposite Denzel Washington; "A Walk Among Tombstones" co-starring Liam Neeson; "Parkland"; "End of Watch"; "Revolutionary Road"; "Thin Ice"; "Brokeback Mountain"; "The Green Hornet"; "Quantum of Solace"; "W.E."; "Between Us"; and Lionsgate's "Hellboy" reboot co-starring Ian McShane and Daniel Dae Kim.

On the small screen, Harbour was seen in WGN America's 1940s series "Manhattan" as rival scientist Reed Akley. The series was created and written by Sam Shaw ("Masters of Sex") and directed by Emmy® Award–winning director Thomas Schlamme ("The West Wing"). Other TV credits include Aaron Sorkin's "The Newsroom," NBC's "State of Affairs," "Rake," "Pan Am" and voiceover work for HBO's "Animals."

Harbour graduated from Dartmouth College with a double major in drama.

RAY WINSTONE (Dreykov) celebrated 40 years in the industry, marking him as one of the U.K.'s most prolific actors playing some of cinema's most iconic roles. Recent film credits include "Cats," "King of Thieves" and "Jawbone," a British film about a boxing champion who returns to his childhood gym after hitting rock bottom.

Winstone starred in two series of Fuqua Films' and eOne's series "Ice" for Directv,

straight off the back of filming ABC's series "Of Kings & Prophets." 2016 also saw Winstone on screen in Ericson Core's remake of the 1991 cult classic "Point Break" and his return to U.K. TV screens with the Sky Arts miniseries "The Nightmare Worlds of H.G. Wells," in which Winstone starred in the title role.

Other credits include "The Legend of Barney Thomson," alongside Robert Carlyle and Emma Thompson, and the ITV three-part drama "The Trials of Jimmy Rose," for which he won a Gold World Medal at the New York Festivals Awards. Prior to this he was seen in Pierre Morel's feature "The Gunman" alongside Sean Penn, Idris Elba and Javier Bardem, and the American film "Zipper," directed by Mora Stephens and co-starring Patrick Wilson, Lena Headey and Richard Dreyfuss, which premiered at Sundance.

Winstone was born in Hackney in the East End of London. He started boxing at the age of 12, was three times London Schoolboy champion and fought twice for England. He studied acting at the Corona School before being cast by director Alan Clarke as Carlin ("the Daddy") in "Scum." This BBC Play production made Winstone's name, and since then he has appeared in numerous TV series and movies. After playing a starring role in Franc Roddam's "Quadrophenia" and being cast by Ken Loach in "Ladybird, Ladybird," Gary Oldman gave Winstone the lead role in his gritty biographical drama "Nil By Mouth," for which he won a British Independent Film Award for best actor and earned a BAFTA Award nomination. His mesmerizing performance led to a succession of challenging roles including Dave in the gangster movie "Face" and Dad in Tim Roth's disturbing drama "The War Zone." He also played in the comedy drama "Agnes Browne" and "Fanny & Elvis" before delivering one of the finest performances of his career opposite Ben Kingsley in "Sexy Beast."

Other film credits include "Cold Mountain," "King Arthur," "The Proposition," Oscar® winner "The Departed," directed by Martin Scorsese, Anthony Minghella's "Breaking and Entering," the title role in the Robert Zemeckis film "Beowulf," Steven Spielberg's "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," "44 Inch Chest" for director Malcolm Venville, and "London Boulevard" and "Edge of Darkness" both for GK Films. Credits also include Darren Aronofsky's epic box-office hit "Noah," "Snow White and the Huntsman" opposite Charlize Theron, and "The Sweeney" for Vertigo Films.

TV credits include "Great Expectations," "Henry VIII" (which went on to win best miniseries/TV movie at the International Emmy® Awards), "Sweeney Todd" and "Compulsion," both films for television for his company Size 9 Productions, and "Vincent," for which Winstone won an International Emmy Award for best actor for his eponymous role.

In December 2007 Winstone received the Richard Harris Award for outstanding contribution at the British Independent Film Awards.

EVER ANDERSON (Young Natasha) is a talented and rising young star of her generation. Currently, she is in production for the live-action remake of "Peter Pan & Wendy," where she is playing the iconic role of Wendy Darling opposite Jude Law as

the infamous Captain Hook. The film is set for a theatrical release in 2022, as well as streaming on Disney+. This marks the first installment of her three-picture deal with Disney.

Anderson began her on-screen career at the age of 8 in the feature film “Resident Evil: The Final Chapter,” playing the role of The Red Queen.

Anderson has been photographed by some of the fashion world’s most distinguished artists, such as Peter Lindbergh, Mikael Jansson, Inez and Vinoodh, Mario Sorrenti, Ellen von Unwerth and Gray Sorrenti. She has also appeared on a variety of magazine covers, including Vogue Bambini, Love, Jalouse, Chaos SixtyNine, Vs. and Flaunt Magazine, as well as appeared in the pages of Vogue Italia, i-D, Egoiste, Interview, Vogue Arabia, L’Officiel and Paper.

On social media, Anderson has accrued a large following on TikTok. Her verified account @everanderson currently has 281.8K followers and 1.8M likes. On Instagram, she has also accrued nearly 250,000 followers.

At only 10 years old, **VIOLET MCGRAW (Young Yelena)** has quickly made a name for herself as one of the most-watched young stars in the entertainment industry today. She can currently be seen in the Oscar buzzed-about film “Our Friend,” starring Casey Affleck, Dakota Johnson and Jason Segal, where she holds her own against these heavyweights. McGraw also will play the lead in the upcoming Blumhouse Productions film “M3GAN.”

In 2018, McGraw starred in the critically acclaimed, “Haunting of Hill House” where she played fan favorite Young Nel. After completing the project, her director, Mike Flanagan, wrote a role for her in his feature film “Doctor Sleep,” and purposely named the character Violet.

On the television front, McGraw starred as Alice (series regular) on the Cinemax series “Jett.” Her “Haunting of Hill House” mom, the talented Carla Gugino, handpicked Violet to play her daughter. Shortly after filming ended on “Jett,” McGraw booked a lead in the film “Separation,” where she acts alongside Rupert Friend (“Homeland”), Madeline Brewer (“The Handmaid’s Tale”) and Brian Cox (“Succession”).

When she is not acting, McGraw enjoys playing soccer and hanging out with her three siblings, who are also in the entertainment business.

From drama to comedy, writing, producing and acting, **O-T FAGBENLE (Mason)** has become one of the most watched talents in the entertainment industry today. He made history in 2020 by becoming the first person to create, write, direct, compose, executive produce and star in the pilot of a television series broadcast on a major network with his original TV comedy series, “Maxxx” (Channel 4, Hulu).

On the television front, it was recently announced that Fagbenle will star as Barack

Obama in Showtime's highly anticipated anthology series "The First Lady" opposite Viola Davis, Gillian Anderson and Michelle Pfeiffer. The limited series is a reframing of American leadership, told through the lens of the women at the heart of the White House. Fagbenle can currently be seen starring in the Golden Globe®– and Emmy®-winning drama series "The Handmaid's Tale" (Hulu) opposite Golden Globe winner Elisabeth Moss. Based on the bestselling novel by Margaret Atwood, the series is set in Gilead, a future totalitarian society that has formed throughout the United States. Fagbenle instantly became a fan favorite as Luke, June Osborne's (Moss) husband from the previous unrepressed world, and his heartbreaking scenes have contributed to the cast's many award nominations and wins, including outstanding drama series at the Primetime Emmy Awards, best drama series for the Critics Choice Television Awards, best television series - drama at the Golden Globe Awards, outstanding performance by an ensemble in a drama series at the Screen Actors Guild Awards® and best international program at the BAFTA Television Awards. Season 4 of "The Handmaid's Tale" premiered on April 28, 2021.

In Europe Fagbenle recently has held lead roles in two flagship U.K. series: Harlan Coben's "The Five" on Netflix and "The Interceptor" for the BBC. In theater, Fagbenle led the National Theatre cast of August Wilson's New York Drama Critics' Circle award-winning play "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" to the prestigious Olivier Award. Fagbenle was also nominated for best actor for the illustrious Evening Standard Awards.

Additional film and television credits for Fagbenle include the HBO film "Looking," completing his memorable characterization of Frank from the network's cult dramedy series of the same name; the BBC's critically acclaimed features "NW" by Zadie Smith and "Walter's War," a biopic of the first mixed heritage officer in the British Army; "Breaking and Entering" (Miramax) opposite Jude Law, Robin Wright and Juliette Binoche; and "I Could Never Be Your Woman" (The Weinstein Company) alongside Michelle Pfeiffer, Paul Rudd and Saoirse Ronan. Fagbenle also starred in the television series "Thorne," an adaptation of the Mark Billingham novels "Sleepyhead" and "Scaredy Cat." Directed by "24" producer Stephen Hopkins, the six one-hour episodes also starred Sandra Oh and David Morrissey, and were sold to more than 100 countries.

In addition to his work in front of the camera, Fagbenle has a passion for working behind the scenes as well. He wrote, produced, directed, composed and starred in the British comedy series "Maxxx." The series centers around formerly famous boy-band star Maxxx (Fagbenle), who tries to make his musical comeback in a bid to win back his famous supermodel ex-girlfriend (Jourdan Dunn), and prove to the world he isn't a washed-up has-been. The series debuted in the U.K. on Channel 4 and made its U.S. debut on Hulu in 2020.

Born in London and raised across London, Spain and Nigeria, Fagbenle was a world traveler at a young age. As a child his passion was music, and he played the saxophone in bands across Europe, performing at the Edinburgh Festival, Wembley Arena, the Royal Albert Hall and even touring Spain. At 16 years old, Fagbenle landed his first proper role in a Nigerian adaptation of the William Shakespeare play "Macbeth." He went on to attend the prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, graduating early in 2001 and joining alumni such as Sean Bean, Ralph Fiennes and

Anthony Hopkins. Theater became Fagbenle's passion, and he appeared in dozens of plays across the U.K., working in notable productions including the national tours of shows such as "Ragamuffin," "Romeo & Juliet" (as Mercutio) and the West End debut of "The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess." His work was met by outstanding reviews and multiple awards and nominations, including an Off West End nomination for best actor for his leading role as Suplianek in "The Conquest of the South Pole," and taking home the M.E.N. Theatre Award for best actor in a leading role for his part in the Pulitzer Prize– and Tony® Award–nominated play "Six Degrees of Separation."

When not on set, Fagbenle loves to play basketball, volunteers at numerous schools providing free drama and music classes for kids, and launched the charity organization ABC Foundation, which is dedicated to providing tech opportunities to young women in Africa. Fagbenle currently splits his time among Los Angeles, London, Tanzania and Toronto.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

CATE SHORTLAND (Director) has a BA in fine arts from Sydney University and a graduate diploma in directing from the Australian Film Television and Radio School. She wrote and directed the award-winning short films "Pentuphouse" (1998), "Flower Girl" (2000) and "Joy" (2000).

Shortland wrote and directed her feature debut, "Somersault," which premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of Cannes in 2004 and went on to win numerous international awards. She co-wrote and directed her second feature, "Lore" (in German language), based on the book "The Dark Room" by Rachel Seiffert, which premiered In Competition at the Sydney Film Festival in 2012 and went on to screen at festivals internationally, winning many awards. Shortland's third feature, "Berlin Syndrome," is based on the book by Melanie Joosten and had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017.

Shortland has directed for a number of television series including "The Secret Life of Us," "The Silence" and "SMILF." Shortland adapted Rosie from Christos Tsiolkas' novel "The Slap" for ABC TV (Australia), which was nominated for a BAFTA and an Emmy® Award and won an AWGIE in 2012 for best-adapted miniseries. Shortland's other TV miniseries writing credits include "The Devil's Playground" and "Deadline Gallipoli" for Matchbox Pictures and "The Kettering Incident" for Porchlight Films/Amazon Prime.

ERIC PEARSON (Screenplay by) began his professional career at Marvel Studios in its writers' program. Along with several screenplays, he wrote a majority of the short films from the Marvel One-Shot series, including "Agent Carter," which went on to become a TV series of the same name on ABC. Pearson wrote on both seasons of the series.

Continuing his relationship with Marvel Studios, Pearson contributed pre-production and/or post-production writing on "Ant-Man," "Spider-Man: Homecoming," "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame." Marvel Studios brought Pearson on to write

“Thor: Ragnarok” at the end of 2015 and then sent him to Australia to continue his work on the script throughout production. Disney released “Thor: Ragnarok” in the U.S. on November 3, 2017, and the film’s worldwide box-office take was over $850 million.

At the beginning of 2019, Marvel Studios brought Pearson on to write “Black Widow” and then sent him to London (as well as other locations) to continue his work on the script throughout production. “Black Widow” will be released on July 9, 2021.

On March 31, 2021, Legendary Entertainment released “Godzilla vs. Kong” through Warner Bros. Opening during the pandemic, “Godzilla vs. Kong” made over $430 million at the worldwide box office. Pearson has a “screenplay by” credit on the film.

At the moment, Pearson has multiple projects in various stages of development for Imagine Entertainment & Universal Pictures, Atomic Monster & Universal Pictures, and Sony Pictures. Pearson has also twice been on Hollywood’s Black List: once for his script “Perfect Match” (co-written with Morgan Schechter) and again for his script “Out of State.”

Pearson graduated from New York University, where he studied screenwriting at the Dramatic Writing Department in its Tisch School of the Arts.

JAC SCHAEFFER (Story by) is the head writer and an executive producer for Marvel Studios’ “WandaVision,” which kicked off on Disney+ on Jan. 15, 2021.

Schaeffer launched her career in 2009 as writer/director/producer of the feature film “TiMER.” She wrote the screenplay for Walt Disney Animation Studios’ 2017 featurette “Olaf’s Frozen Adventure,” and 2019’s “The Hustle,” which starred Anne Hathaway and Rebel Wilson. Schaeffer also contributed to the story for Marvel Studios’ upcoming feature film “Black Widow,” starring Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff.

NED BENSON (Story by) was born and raised in New York City, where he graduated from Columbia University in 2001. He is the writer-director of “The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him” and “The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Her” starring Jessica Chastain and James McAvoy. Benson spends his time between New York, N.Y., and Venice, Calif.

KEVIN FEIGE, p.g.a. (Produced by), producer, president of Marvel Studios and chief creative officer of Marvel, is the driving creative force behind several billion-dollar franchises and an unprecedented number of blockbuster feature films, all connected within the Marvel Cinematic Universe. A hands-on producer, Feige oversees Marvel Studios’ feature film productions, with 23 film releases that have all opened No. 1 at the box office and collectively grossed nearly $23 billion worldwide. Nine of the MCU films have crossed the $1 billion threshold at the global box office, including “Avengers: Endgame,” which garnered almost $2.8 billion at the worldwide box office and was the fastest film in cinematic history to reach $2 billion.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is currently the highest grossing film franchise of all time. Feige is building on that success with a host of new series streaming on Disney+ in 2021, including “WandaVision,” which debuted on Jan. 15; “The Falcon and The Winter Soldier,” which started streaming March 19; and “Loki,” which launched June 9; as well as upcoming series What If…?,” “Ms. Marvel” and “Hawkeye.”

Upcoming feature films include the action-packed spy thriller “Black Widow,” the intriguing “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings,” and “Eternals,” which introduces the MCU’s newest ensemble of Super Heroes in an epic story that spans thousands of years.

An Academy Award® nominee for “Black Panther,” Feige was honored with the 2019 David O. Selznick Achievement Award from the Producers Guild of America, as well as the Albert R. Broccoli Britannia Award for Worldwide Contribution to Entertainment from BAFTA (British Academy Film Awards).

Feige is a graduate of the University of Southern California, School of Cinematic Arts.

Marvel Studios co-president **LOUIS D’ESPOSITO (Executive Producer)** served as executive producer on the blockbuster hits “Iron Man,” “Iron Man 2,” “Thor,” “Captain America: The First Avenger,” “Marvel’s The Avengers,” “Iron Man 3,” “Thor: The Dark World,” “Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” “Guardians of the Galaxy,” “Captain America: Civil War,” “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” “Ant-Man,” “Doctor Strange,” “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2,” “Spider-Man: Homecoming,” “Thor: Ragnarok,” “Black Panther,” “Avengers: Infinity War,” “Ant-Man and The Wasp,” “Captain Marvel,” “Avengers: Endgame” and “Spider-Man: Far From Home.”

Upcoming projects on which D’Esposito is collaborating with Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige include the feature films “Black Widow,” “Eternals,” Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings,” “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,” “Thor: Love and Thunder” and “Blade,” as well as a slate of programming for the Disney+ platform, including “WandaVision,” “The Falcon and The Winter Soldier,” “Loki,” “Ms. Marvel,” “Hawkeye,” “She-Hulk,” “Moon Knight” and “What If…?”

As co-president of the studio and executive producer on all Marvel Studios features and streaming shows, D’Esposito balances running the studio with overseeing each project from its development stage to distribution. In addition to executive producing Marvel Studios’ films and shows, D’Esposito directed the Marvel One-Shot “Item 47,” which made its debut to fans at the 2012 San Diego Comic-Con International and was featured again at the LA Shorts Fest in September 2012. The project was released as an added feature on the “Marvel’s The Avengers” Blu-ray disc. D’Esposito also directed the second Marvel One-Shot, “Agent Carter” starring Hayley Atwell, which premiered at the 2013 San Diego Comic-Con to critical praise from press and fans, and is an added feature on the “Iron Man 3” Blu-ray disc. The One-Shot’s popularity led to development of the TV series “Marvel’s Agent Carter.” D’Esposito began his tenure at Marvel Studios in 2006.

Prior to Marvel, D'Esposito's executive producing credits include the 2006 hit film "The Pursuit of Happyness," starring Will Smith; "Zathura: A Space Adventure"; and the 2003 hit "S.W.A.T.," starring Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell.

VICTORIA ALONSO (Executive Producer) serves as executive vice president of production for Marvel Studios and as an executive producer of all Marvel films, which have amassed nearly $23 billion worldwide, including "Avengers: Endgame," "Captain America: The First Avenger," "Guardians of the Galaxy," "Thor," "Black Panther" and the female-led "Captain Marvel" as well as upcoming storylines around major strong female characters such as "Black Widow." Alonso also serves as executive producer on new series streaming on Disney+, including this year's "WandaVision," which debuted on Jan. 15; "The Falcon and The Winter Soldier," which started streaming March 19; and "Loki," which launched June 9; as well as upcoming series What If…?," "Ms. Marvel" and "Hawkeye."

A native of Buenos Aires, Alonso began her career in visual effects & production—from PA to VFX producer—and eventually joined Marvel as EVP of visual effects and post production.

Alonso was named one of People en Español Magazine's top "Poderosa" Most Influential Hispanic Women in 2019. She was also listed as one of The Hollywood Reporter's 2017/2018 Women in Entertainment Power 100 and was the 2015 honoree for the Muse Award for Outstanding Vision and Achievement. She was the first woman to be presented with the Harold Lloyd Award from the Advanced Imaging Society, and the first woman to receive the Visionary Award at the 15th Annual VES Awards.

BRAD WINDERBAUM (Executive Producer) is the head of streaming, television, and animation for Marvel Studios. Joining the Marvel universe during the production of the company's first theatrical release "Iron Man," Winderbaum went on to become a founding member of Marvel Studios' Parliament, working as executive producer on such films as "Black Widow" and "Thor: Ragnarok." Winderbaum most recently created the studios' first animated production, the upcoming Disney+ series "What If…?" on which he is executive producer. He is currently a producer on next year's blockbuster film "Thor: Love and Thunder," and an executive producer on forthcoming Disney+ series "Hawkeye," "Ms. Marvel," "She-Hulk" and "Moon Knight."

During his history with Marvel, Winderbaum co-produced the original "Ant-Man" film and created the Marvel One-Shot program of shorts, acting as executive producer on "Team Thor parts 1 & 2," "All Hail the King," "Agent Carter," "Item 47," "The Consultant," and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Thor's Hammer." During Phase 1 of the MCU, Winderbaum developed the universe's first interlocking timeline and produced behind-the-scenes documentaries and interactive campaigns for "Iron Man 2," "Thor," "Captain America: The First Avenger" and "The Avengers." He was an executive producer on recent behind-the-scenes Disney+ specials "Assembled: The Making of WandaVision" and "Assembled: The Making of Falcon and The Winter Soldier."

Before joining Marvel Studios, Winderbaum was a pioneer of early online storytelling, receiving both an Emmy® Award for outstanding broadband drama and a Webby People's Choice Award for an interactive series he wrote and directed entitled "Satacracy 88."

Winderbaum received an MFA in film production from USC and a BFA in studio art from NYU, where he staged underground theater productions and created countless surreal illustrations. When he was a freshman in high school, he designed the school district logo that they still use. Winderbaum grew up in Clarkstown, New York.

NIGEL GOSTELOW (Executive Producer) has had a long and varied career in feature film and television drama production. He most recently served as executive producer on Tim Burton's "Dumbo," his third feature working with Burton, the others being "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children" and "Dark Shadows."

Gostelow's other credits include executive producing Alan Taylor's "Thor: The Dark World" and Joe Johnston's 2011 "Captain America: The First Avenger."

Gostelow started his film career working with Derek Meddings on several movies—from "Krull" to "Spies Like Us"—and as an assistant director on several smaller productions. He spent a number of years as location manager on a wide range of projects, including "The Accidental Tourist," "84 Charing Cross Road," "Hornblower" and the acclaimed series Agatha Christie's "Poirot." His unit production manager credits include working with Joe Johnston on "The Wolfman," Paul Greengrass on "The Bourne Ultimatum," Ron Howard on "The Da Vinci Code" and Christopher Nolan on "Batman Begins," as well as "Agent Cody Banks 2," "Below" and "Captain Corelli's Mandolin."

BRIAN CHAPEK (Co-Producer) is a director of production and development for Marvel Studios. Chapek began his career at Marvel Studios in 2012 as a production and development assistant. He then went on to support the head of the Marvel One-Shots program for two installments: "Agent Carter" and "All Hail the King."

Afterward, Chapek aided in the development and production of the feature film "Ant-Man," working directly alongside the co-producer. In 2016 Chapek became an associate producer on the third installment of the Thor franchise, "Thor: Ragnarok." In addition to his associate producing duties, Chapek also produced the short film "Team Darryl" as part of the "Thor: Ragnarok" home entertainment release. "Black Widow" is Chapek's third feature film he's completed for Marvel Studios, and his first co-producer credit. Chapek is also serving as an executive producer on the upcoming "Thor: Love and Thunder."

MITCH BELL (Co-Producer), co-producer and vice president of physical production, started with Marvel Studios in 2010. He served as co-producer and Marvel Studios production executive on "Black Widow" and has overseen production in the same capacity on "Avengers: Endgame," "Ant-Man and The Wasp," "Avengers: Infinity War,"

“Spider-Man: Homecoming,” “Captain America: Civil War” and “Avengers: Age of Ultron.”

Earlier in his time with Marvel Studios, Bell served as associate producer on “Captain America: The First Avenger,” “Iron Man 3” and “Captain America: The Winter Soldier.” Bell was executive producer on several One-Shots for Marvel, including “Item 47” and “Agent Carter,” and is currently working on “Eternals” and “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness.” Prior to joining Marvel Studios, Bell was a freelance production supervisor with over 20 years of experience in both features and television. Originally from Fort Collins, Colo., Bell moved to Los Angeles in the early ’90s and started his career as a production assistant at Imagine Films.

GABRIEL BERISTAIN (Director of Photography) was born in Mexico into a theatrical dynasty, and later settled in England. He worked as a documentary cameraman throughout Europe, covering sensitive political, social and ecological issues. At the NFTS in England, Beristain shot Jenny Wilkes’ Academy Award® winner for best foreign student film, “Mother’s Wedding.”

The Berlin Film Festival honored Beristain in 1987 with a Special Silver Bear for outstanding single achievement in cinematography and visual style for Derek Jarman’s “Caravaggio.”

In the U.S. he worked in cult classics like “Blood In, Blood Out” and “Dolores Claiborne.” Director of photography credits amount to over 50 motion pictures and 100 commercials and music videos, including the classic Aerosmith videos. He reenergized the filmography of David Mamet (“The Spanish Prisoner”) and Guillermo del Toro (“Blade II”), and broke new ground in films like “S.W.A.T.,” “The Ring Two” and “Blade: Trinity.” He helped to launch the successful career of David Ayer with “Street Kings.”

He shot substantial additional photography for the three installments of “Iron Man,” along with “Thor: The Dark World” and “Thor: Ragnarok,” as well as the successful “Guardians of the Galaxy” and additional photography for WB/DC’s “Suicide Squad.”

On television, he shot the pilot for “Hawaii Five-0” and two seasons of “Magic City,” the beautiful Starz series with its celebrated visual style. He shot four episodes for the series “The Strain,” produced by del Toro, the first season of the acclaimed Marvel TV show “Agent Carter” and most of the CBS remake of the classic “MacGyver,” where he had his debut as a TV director.

As a producer/director Beristain is developing several projects, including “The House of Abraham Phillips,” to be shot in Wales; “El Imperio de la Habana,” based on the book “La Vida Secreta de Meyer Lansky en la Habana” by Cuban author Enrique Cirules, to be shot entirely in Cuba; and “Tina,” based on the life of Tina Modotti.

He cut his teeth as a full-fledged producer with “Havana Kyrie” by Paolo Consorti, with the iconic actor Franco Nero, which was shot in Italy and Cuba.

Beristain has been a member of AMPAS since 1997 and is a member of BSC, ASC and DGA.

CHARLES WOOD (Production Designer) began his entertainment industry career in 1991 as a visual effects art director, working on such projects as Andrew Davis' "The Fugitive" and "Under Siege," Sam Raimi's "Army of Darkness" and Peter Weir's "Fearless."

Segueing to design work, he has since collaborated on projects ranging from big studio movies to independent films. His credits include F. Gary Gray's "Men in Black: International"; Marvel Studios' "Avengers: Endgame," "Avengers: Infinity War," "Doctor Strange," "Avengers: Age of Ultron," "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Thor: The Dark World"; Jonathan Liebesman's "Wrath of the Titans"; Joe Carnahan's "The A-Team"; Andy Tennant's "Fool's Gold"; Michael Apted's "Amazing Grace"; and "Flyboys," directed by Tony Bill.

Earlier credits include Peter Howitt's "Laws of Attraction," "The Italian Job," directed by F. Gary Gray, and Stephen Kay's "Get Carter."

In 2000 Wood earned an Emmy® Award nomination for outstanding art direction for a miniseries, movie or a special for the television movie "Geppetto." He was nominated for a BAFTA Award in 2017 for his work on Marvel Studios' "Doctor Strange."

JANY TEMIME (Costume Designer) won a Costume Designers Guild Award for excellence in contemporary film for "Skyfall." She designed the costumes for the Harry Potter films "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," for which she received a Costume Designers Guild Award nomination, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" and the two-part "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," for which she won a Costume Designers Guild Award for Part 2.

Most recently Temime has worked with Michael Bay on "6 Underground," starring Ryan Reynolds and Adria Arjona, Rupert Goold's "Judy," starring Jessie Buckley and Renée Zellweger, and "The Kid Who Would Be King," directed by Joe Cornish.

Temime worked on Alfonso Cuarón's "Gravity," starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, and served as the costume designer on the action adventure "Wrath of the Titans," starring Sam Worthington, and more recently Brett Ratner's "Hercules."

Her other credits include Martin Paul McGuigan's "Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool," starring Annette Bening and Jamie Bell; Morten Tyldum's "Passengers," starring Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt; "Victor Frankenstein," starring Daniel Radcliffe and James McAvoy; Martin McDonagh's "In Bruges," starring Ralph Fiennes, Colin Farrell

and Brendan Gleeson; Alfonso Cuarón's "Children of Men," starring Clive Owen; Agnieszka Holland's "Copying Beethoven," starring Ed Harris; and Beeban Kidron's "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," starring Renée Zellweger.

She earned a British Independent Film Award nomination for her costume designs for "High Heels and Low Lifes," starring Minnie Driver. She had earlier won a BAFTA Cymru Award for her work on Marc Evans' "House of America," and the 1995 Utrecht Film Festival's Golden Calf for best costume design for Marleen Gorris' Oscar®-winning "Antonia's Line."

Her additional credits encompass more than 40 international motion picture and television projects, including Werner Herzog's "Invincible"; Todd Komarnicki's "Resistance"; Marleen Gorris' "The Luzhin Defence"; Paul McGuigan's "Gangster No. 1"; Edward Thomas' "Rancid Aluminum"; Mike van Diem's "Character," which won an Oscar® for best foreign language film; Danny Deprez's "The Ball"; George Sluizer's "The Commissioner" and "Crimetime"; Ate de Jong's "All Men Are Mortal"; and Frans Weisz's "Last Call."

GEOFFREY BAUMANN (VFX Supervisor) is a freelance visual effects supervisor whose most recent credits include "Black Panther," "Doctor Strange," "Avengers: Age of Ultron," "In the Heart of the Sea" and "Captain America: The Winter Soldier."

Before joining the production side, Baumann spent 15 years at Digital Domain with credits on over 18 feature films, including "Oblivion," "Real Steel," "Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief," "Iron Man 3" and "Marvel's The Avengers," among others.

LORNE BALFE (Music by) is a GRAMMY® Award–winning, Emmy®- and BAFTA-nominated composer. Whether scoring an impossible mission, the heartbreak of the Queen, the perils of the Caped Crusader or the soul of a genius, Balfe creates a musical voice that reflects the characters and the stories that embody them.

Originally from Inverness, Scotland, Balfe has created music in virtually all genres and for all visual media, with projects ranging from major studio to independent films, tent-pole video game franchises, beloved animated feature films, critically acclaimed television series and documentary features. Some of Balfe's latest projects include the TV miniseries "The Cry" (BBC One); "Ad Astra" (20th Century Fox), which he co-scored with composer Max Richter; Ang Lee's "Gemini Man" (Paramount Pictures); HBO's "His Dark Materials"; as well as director/producer Michael Bay's "6 Underground" (Netflix) and "Bad Boys for Life" (Columbia Pictures).

Balfe consistently receives accolades for his musical compositions. He recently received critical acclaim for his score in the most successful film of the Mission: Impossible franchise, writer/director Christopher McQuarrie's "Mission: Impossible - Fallout" (Paramount Pictures). In 2017 Balfe was awarded an Emmy® nomination for outstanding main title theme for "Genius" (National Geographic), the Ron Howard–

produced scripted TV series about Albert Einstein; in 2018 he created a new musical voice for “Genius: Picasso,” about Pablo Picasso. His “Picasso Suite” from the series premiered in Picasso’s birthplace of Malaga, Spain, by the Malaga Symphony Orchestra at the world-renowned Malaga Film Music Festival.

Other notable film and TV projects include “The Crown” (Netflix), “The LEGO Batman Movie” (Warner Bros.), the Oscar®-nominated film “The Florida Project” (A24), “Terminator Genisys” (Paramount Pictures), “Pacific Rim: Uprising” and “13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi” (Paramount Pictures). He also served as score producer for “Dunkirk” (Warner Bros).

Balfe’s big break came when he scored his first major feature film, “Megamind.” Within a year he expanded his scoring talents into video games, co-composing “Assassin’s Creed: Revelations,” which received a BAFTA nomination for best original music. His video game credits now include “Crysis 2,” four titles in the Skylanders series (“Spyro’s Adventure,” “Giants,” “Swap Force” and “Trap Team”), “Assassin’s Creed III,” “Assassin’s Creed III: The Tyranny of King Washington,” “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2” and “Beyond: Two Souls.”

Balfe continues to expand his repertoire in all visual media, including the animated features “Home” and “Penguins of Madagascar” (based on the beloved British TV series); “The Sweeney”; and acclaimed documentaries “Manny” (about the life of Manny Pacquiao), “Salinger” (about J.D. Salinger) and “The Last Man on the Moon” (about Apollo astronaut Gene Cernan). As a score producer Balfe was awarded a GRAMMY® in 2009 for Christopher Nolan’s “The Dark Knight” (Warner Bros). In 2012 Balfe earned his first Emmy® nomination for the miniseries “Restless.”